DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 510 RC 023 753

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TITLE	Recent Research on the Impact of Alternative Education Delivery Systems in Honduras.
PUB DATE	2002-03-00
NOTE	22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparative and International Education Society (46th, Orlando, FL, March 6-9, 2002).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Community Education; *Distance Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Indigenous Populations; *Nontraditional Education; *Outcomes of Education; Program Evaluation; *Rural Education; Student Attitudes; Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Honduras

ABSTRACT

In Honduras, 88 percent of the rural population has 6 years or less of formal education. Several distance education schemes have been undertaken to address both low rural educational levels and the destruction of schools by Hurricane Mitch. This paper reports on recent studies of two distance education efforts with substantial international support. Since the mid-1990s, USAID has supported EDUCATODOS, which originally covered grades 1-6 using packages of printed materials supplemented by radio lessons. In 1999, the program was extended to grades 7-9, and audio materials were distributed on cassettes and CDs. Telebasica is based on the Mexican Telesecundaria program and serves grades 7-9 using videotapes and printed materials from Mexico. Telebasica operates during the day with trained teachers in converted schools, while EDUCATODOS operates in the evening in any available space using volunteer facilitators. A 1997 evaluation of EDUCATODOS found that the program had offered 120,000 person-hours of schooling to Honduran youth and adults at 28 percent of the cost of equivalent traditional schooling. EDUCATODOS students had higher achievement than traditional elementary students, but dropout rates were significant, especially among indigenous groups. In 2002, ongoing research projects are evaluating program impacts on women and on the economy, documenting changes in student attitudes and character at the seventh-grade level, studying volunteer facilitators (teachers), and examining elements of program organization and management. Preliminary findings indicate that the two programs are raising student achievement, improving student self-confidence and employment potential, and offering innovative and flexible delivery. (Contains 20 references.) (SV)

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July 2002, Tegucigalpa

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Recent Research on the Impact of Alternative Education Delivery Systems in Honduras

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ED 470 510

Background

During the past several years, Honduras has been recovering from the ravages of Hurricane Mitch. During that time, several educational initiatives have been undertaken in an attempt to reach the many children and adults who have been left or pushed out of the educational system, either because of dislocations that were part of the Mitch disaster or because of the endemic limits of the tradition Honduran school system. The Honduran education system had limited coverage in rural areas even before the Hurricane, and dislocations and destruction of schools during the Hurricane further reduced the coverage of the government school system, especially in isolated areas. In rural areas of Honduras, 88% of the population has six or less years of formal education with an average of less than four years compared to an average of seven years in urban areas.[1]

The new Honduran president, Ricardo Maduro, who took office on January 27, 2002, has established as one of his priorities the elimination of poverty in Honduras. The Assistant Minister of the Presidency (a ministry similar to a Prime Minister's office), Rocio Tábora, has prepared a draft paper, with the support of IEQ!!/EDUCATODOS, on education priorities within a poverty reduction strategy.[2] Within this draft, alternative delivery strategies, to supplement the efforts of formal schools, receive substantial attention.

Tábora, in her draft paper, examines statistics pertaining to education and development in Central American countries and concludes that, in order to have sustainable development in Honduras, around 90% of the population must have at least primary education. Honduras, along with other countries in the region, initially enrolls around that percentage of children, but there are

[1] Van Steenwyk, Ned, "Educatodos in Camayagua," Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), Educatodos, December 2001.
[2] Tábora, Rocio, "Hacia la ampliación y fortalecimiento de la Educación Alternativa y Participativa como reto fundamental para la Reducción de la Pobreza en Honduras (*Towards the Extension and Broadening of Alternative, Participatory Education and a Fundamental Goal of Poverty Reduction in Honduras*)" (draft), Proyecto Improving Educational Quality – Honduras, Secretaría de Educación, January, 2002.

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high dropout and repeater rates at the early grades. The primary school must increase its efficiency and at the same time alternate delivery systems must be expanded to provide a safety net for those who drop out along the way. Another study, as of early February, 2002, still in draft form as of that date, suggests that poverty and marginalization of large number of people in Honduras are the root causes of delinquency in Honduras.[3] Poverty, for instance, has encouraged large numbers of young people to migrate to the cities where they join gangs and otherwise are drawn into delinquent behavior. The new government has proceeded with a policy of "zero tolerance" toward criminality and delinquency, but this study suggests that the long-term solution is expanding educational opportunity, including training for work. The author points out that at least 200,000 school-age children are not in primary school (grades 1-6) and 800,000 are not in secondary school (grades 7-9 in Honduras – after that, students enter various kinds of specialized schools at grades 10-12). Clearly, distance education is one of the alternatives for achieving such expansion of education as recommended in this study.

In early February, 2002, the Consejo Nacional Indígena de Honduras (*The National Indigenous Council of Honduras)* presented President Maduro's administration with suggestions for improving the economic and social conditions of organized ethnic groups which make up about 10% of the population or about 650,000 people, most of whom live in rural areas. The major ethnic groups include the Lenca, Pech, Tolupán, Tawaka, Nahuas, Misquito, Garífuna, Chortí, and Hondurans of African descent.[4] The Consejo also suggested that the education curriculum include content that will help the groups understand and strengthen their cultural heritage. The administration and the Interamerican Development Bank are in discussions concerning a possible loan to strengthen health and education efforts among the indigenous population.

These are only examples of the current concern among all leadership groups in Honduras for improving the social and economic conditions of the entire population and for extending education. This was reflected in the previous administration of the Honduran government that encouraged participation of the community in educational reform efforts. A panoply of reform commissions has operated in Honduras the past several years, each resulting in broad recommendations for education of the future. To respond to opportunities for highly indebted poor countries to qualify for partial debt forgiveness from international lenders, Honduras brought

[3] Hernández, Lisandro, "La violencia y el neoliberalismo en Honduras (*Violence and neo-liberalism in Honduras*)," draft discussed 9 February, 2002, in a conference of the Patronatos de Honduras y el Partido UnificaciónDemocrática, as reported in La Prensa, February 10, 2002, page 5A.

[4] "Maduro promete atender salud y educación a grupos étnicos," La Prensa, February 10, 2002, page 3A.

together all of the various actors interested in educational reform with a group that called itself the Foro Nacional de Convergencia. This foro had numerous meetings around the country during the late 1990's culminating in a fifth national meeting in December 1999. The report of the group recommended broad ranging policies for Honduran education, pre-school through higher and including non-formal, out-of-school education.[5] Following the final meeting of the Foro in December, 1999, the Ministry of Education undertook a study supported by Spanish technical assistance issued a document proposing a general framework for educational and curriculum reform.[6] Later in 2000, the Ministry of Education issued another document proposing general lines for the development of a national curriculum for basic education.[7] This proposal is still under discussion, as are a number of others designed to update and earlier document of the Ministry entitled "Rendimientos Básicos" that has formed the basis for the design of curriculum materials since the mid-nineties.

In 2001, by a series of policy discussions and reports leading to the "Estrategía para la Reducción de la Pobreza: Un compromiso de todos por todos (Strategy for Poverty Reduction: A Commitment of All for All)."[8] This "strategy" paper gives high priority to extending the quantity and improving the quality of pre-school through secondary education (kindergarten through grade nine) in Honduras. It also suggests greater relevance to the world of work and the use of alternate delivery strategies to reach those who drop out of formal school or who never attend it at all. The paper suggests that there must be 95% coverage of primary education (grades 1-6) by 2015 and a net coverage of at least 70% of grades 7-9 by that date.

A major problem is that the government has had few resources of its own to finance educational development. Beyond limited funding for teachers' salaries, most of the innovative projects are almost entirely funded by donors. However, this may change with the Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty and the partial forgiveness of the international debts of Honduras, assuming that these funds will be used for programs that contribute to poverty reduction.

Distance education efforts have seemed logical over the years in Honduras. Currently, several distance education schemes are operating in Honduras, each with a slightly different strategy and each contributing to the provision of educational opportunity to those who would

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[5] República de Honduras, Foro Nacional de Convergencia. Propuesta de la Sociedad Hondureña para la Transformación de la Educación Nacional. Graficentro Editores, 2000.

[6] Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), *Transformación del Sistema Educativo en Honduras: Propuesta del la Secretaria de Educación,* Comayaguela (Tegucigalpa), January, 2000.

[7] Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), *Lineamientos para el Diseño del Currículo Nacional Básico,* Comayaguela (Tegucigalpa), October, 2000

[8] República de Honduras, Tegucigalpa, July, 2001.

otherwise be left behind. Maestro en Casa, supported by mostly volunteers within the Catholic Church community, is a program that extends from grade one through secondary (grades 10 through 12) for those who have dropped out of traditional schools. The program provides self-study materials for use at home, supplemented by radio/audio modules and weekend tutors for those enrolled. The instructional materials used were initially those developed in the Canary Islands, and they have been adapted to Honduran needs over time. There are about 20,000 students, largely in rural areas, in grades one to twelve in the program.

SEMED, in turn, is a non-formal program created about a decade ago that is administered by the Ministry of Education It provides extensive self-study materials for grades seven through nine plus a secondary program at grades ten to eleven that provides a "bachillerato" in Business Administration. Those receiving the bachillerato can continue to university studies. At both levels, self-study students must attend five hours a day of formal classes on Saturdays and Sundays. About 16,000 students are enrolled in the program. The program is managed by technical schools who appoint staff to oversea the program and give the weekend classes.

ABC Español is a program funded by Spanish technical assistance that offers distance education opportunities through grade six in limited areas of Honduras. The Spanish also sponsor PRALEBA (Programa de Educación para Jóvenes y Adultos) in limited areas of Honduras. This program offers adult education opportunities for youth and adults. Another national interactive radio/audio distance education program for first and second graders, Aprendemos Matemática, has been financed by a local foundation and USAID. FEBLI (Fomento de la Educación Básica en Lempira e Intibucá) is a program in Olancho and El Paraison districts of Honduras. Sponsored by German technical assistance (GTZ), the program includes elements of distance education and works with 1,700 schools. Finally, COHCIT (Consejo Hondureño de Ciencia y Tecnología) sponsors a program of "escuelas de aldeas solares" designed to promote interest and achievement in science.

Somewhat related to these efforts to offer alternative delivery strategies for basic education PROHECO (Program Hondureño de Educación Comunitaria). This is a program that encourages communities to set up their own schools with resources that they find themselves. The content follows a national curriculum guide disseminated by the Ministry of Education in the late nineties. A national team overseers the program and provides technical help. About 200 schools are involved in the program.

Two other distance education efforts are the subject of this paper, however, and they have received substantial international support over the past six or seven years. These two distance education efforts are the EDUCATODOS program, largely supported by USAID since the mid 1990's, and the Telebásica program, largely encouraged and subsidized by the Mexican government since the late 1990's. They have been extensively researched in order to see if they are viable alternative delivery systems that will help the government reach its goal of getting most children through ninth grade by 2015. It appears from these studies that both have the potential of extending educational opportunity, especially in rural areas, at a cost much less than that of formal school systems.

The original EDUCATODOS program covered grades one through six using packages of printed materials supplemented by radio lessons. The project was extended to grades seven through nine through a new project that began in 1999. This grade seven through nine program uses recorded audio materials distributed via cassettes and CD's as part of a teaching/learning package that includes teacher and student manuals. On the other hand, the Telebásica program offers only grades seven through nine. The latter is based on the Mexican Telesecundaria program that has operated in Mexico since the 1960's and which has been offered at no cost to Central American governments pursuant to a regional agreement in the mid-1990's. It uses elaborate packages of printed and video materials (broadcast in Mexico and distributed by videotape in Honduras) to deliver grade seven through nine instruction. Both EDUCATODOS and Telebásica programs are administered through the EDUCATODOS infrastructure, whose field personnel backstop both efforts.

Although recent research on worldwide efforts in distance education show that many distance education, and especially television and radio-based efforts, in the past have not survived past initial funding phases,[9] the distance education programs in Honduras may have a better chance at sustainability than most. As will be seen below, the two programs examined in this paper have been shown to be efficient in delivering education to large numbers of Hondurans initially left out of the system. Neither program relies entirely on broadcasting the audiovisual portions of the curriculum materials (both deliver these materials on videotape, audio cassette or CD). In addition, it is unlikely that Honduras can achieve its stated goals in expansion of educational opportunity over the coming decade or so without continued support of such efforts.

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[9] Spaulding, Seth, "Distance Education, Broadcast Media, Virtual Reality and Cyberspace – Is the Future Passing Us By?," *Comparative Education Review*," Vol. 46, No. 1.February 2002.

EDUCATODOS

From 1995 until recently, USAID funded a basic education and skills training project in Honduras titled BEST. Elements of this program continue today under BEST and subsequent USAID projects and include the building of technical and vocational schools to better prepare Honduran youth for the world of work. This project also initiated a basic education scheme designed to reach primary-school dropouts (grades one through six) via evening classes at centers using primarily volunteers. This program, called EDUCATODOS, includes teacher manuals, texts for the students and radio instruction linked to each unit. The original project was expanded under a new USAID global program called Improving Educational Quality (IEQ) in 1999 and experts from abroad were recruited to assist the Hondurans in extending the program upward to grades seven through nine. The program at this level uses audio materials to supplement the printed materials but the audio segments are distributed with the rest of the instructional materials via cassettes and/or CD's rather than being broadcast via radio.

This expansion was made possible, in part, because of the USAID disaster relief program following Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The program expansion involves the preparation of an entire set of instructional materials, including teacher and student manuals and audio modules, for the three grades and these materials are progressing as planned. The full set through ninth grade should be ready by mid-2002. They are being gradually introduced first in pilot centers around the country and then are being made available for any community that wishes to start a volunteer study group.

Sizeable numbers of young people attend these pilot centers to catch up on grades seven to nine that they had not attended or dropped out of. Questions have been raised about the degree to which the curriculum of EDUCATODOS is the equivalent of formal schools, and EDUCATODOS defends the curriculum as relevant to the students it is trying to attract. As will be noted below, EDUCATODOS students seem to do as well or better, on average, on traditional subject matter tests in language and math as students in traditional schools.

An evaluation team sent by USAID in 2000 to evaluate the work of the earlier USAID efforts that included the first phase of EDUCATODOS commented on the diversity of curriculums in Honduras. This has largely been because each donor agency that takes on an educational project often designs a curriculum to suit the project. Of course, definitions of what a curriculum consists of vary significantly. National efforts to set "curriculum standards" persist and all of the various projects that package curriculum differently are working with the Ministry to come up with

"standards" that permit substantial flexibility to allow for local and regional needs as well as alternate delivery strategies.

The EDUCATODOS program is designed to operate in the evening for around 1.5 to 2 or so hours with 45 minute audio lessons (via cassette or CD) combined with printed materials for both students and for volunteers who organize groups to listen to the audio materials and to follow the instructional materials. The program began by producing materials and audio packages for grades one through six with an inter-disciplinary curriculum organized around transversal themes that impact the lives of Hondurans. In 2001, seventh grade was introduced and during 2002 and 2003, grades eight and nine will be introduced, thus completing the basic education cycle. Following ninth grade, students may continue to secondary schools, though there are few secondary school opportunities where EDUCATODOS centers are located.

As noted above, EDUCATODOS centers operate entirely with volunteer group leaders (facilitadores), some of whom receive food donations from the World Food program. As of early 2002, about 4,000 such volunteers are active in grades one through seven of the program and most of them also are active in other civic organizations and programs.[10]

EDUCATODOS volunteers are not entirely on their own, however. They are supported by a headquarters structure, under a Director, that includes printing facilities to produce the instructional materials used by the students and manuals used by the volunteers, about 200 promoters and District (province) coordinators who visit each district to work with community leaders and volunteers and to train the volunteers in how to use the audio and printed materials, vehicles and drivers to deliver the materials to the centers and to move the promoters around the country, and a staff of evaluators, researchers and computer database managers who develop and administer various kinds of tests to track the progress of the students and to record other administrative data. As of February 2002, field staff, including promoters and regional coordinators, totaled 213 and headquarters staff (in Tegucigalpa) totaled 173. This staff is under the Ministry of Education, although a large part of the cost of the staff and its operation has been born by USAID. The Ministry provides counterpart funds of about the equivalent of a million dollars a year for salaries of promoters.

The actual development of the curriculum content, beyond the Ministry of Education's approved curriculum for grades seven through nine, including the content of the printed materials

[10] Van Steenwyk, Ned, "Los Facilitadores Voluntarios de EDUCATODOS,) Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, January, 2002

and the audio materials, has been done by a parallel group currently called IEQ/ EDUCATODOS, Honduras. This group has been assembled through a contract with a consortium of U.S. consulting groups that includes the American Institutes for Research, the Academy for Educational Development, Devtech Systems, Inc., and the University of Pittsburgh. A Chief of Party coordinates the work in Honduras in a group that includes a variety of Latin American and U.S. consultants.[11]

There are some who feel that the curriculum materials and radio broadcasts for the early grades badly need revision to better match the curriculum and recorded audio materials that were later developed for the upper grades and that a smaller group of curriculum developers should continue indefinitely to continue such revisions. Although several funding sources seem interested in the program, it is unclear which will provide the kind of support necessary for a continuing curriculum development team, even though it is likely that there will be some degree of continued USAID support.

Telebásica

Telebásica in Honduras is an adaptation of the longstanding Telesecundaria program of Mexico that provides seventh through ninth grade instruction through centers that use a comprehensive set of instructional materials, including television modules distributed by satellite. In Mexico, some 15,000 of these centers throughout the country operate parallel to the formal school system and provide education opportunities for over a million school-age youth. Under an agreement with the government of Mexico, Honduras has been experimenting with the use of the Telebásica textbooks, teacher manuals and television modules in Centros de Educación Básica (Centres of Basic Education), essentially elementary schools that have added seventh to ninth grades in order to provide expanded educational opportunity in the country. In Honduras, the television modules are downloaded from Mexico via satellite, duplicated and distributed on tape.

The Telebásica program offers five subjects, Natural Science (Biology, Chemistry and Physics), Social Studies (World History and General Geography), Mathematics, Spanish Language and Literature, and English as a Foreign Language. The delivery system includes exhaustive student and teacher manuals, fascinating instructional video sequences and the in-service training of teachers in active teaching and learning methods.

[11] Jane Schubert is the IEQ project director at AIR in Washington, D.C., and Carmen Siri is Chief of Party of the team in Honduras.

The experimental program operates in some 37 centers and may be expanding in 2002 to include around 20 more. USAID included modes support for the program under EDUCATODOS from 1999 until the first ninth grade graduates were produced at the end of the 2001 school year. USAID funding for 2002 onward is uncertain.

The centers are established at primary schools (grades one through six) where the community takes the initiative to expand the schools to become "Centros de Educación Básica" (Basic Education Centers) that complete the compulsory education cycle through grades seven to nine. Several hundred of these centers exist and are expanding rapidly, thus provided a ready market for Telebásica expansion when and if additional funding is available. Administratively it is considered a part of the overall EDUCATODOS program. A small staff in the Telebásica infrastructure downloads the television sequences, has them duplicated, coordinates the training of Telebásica teachers, and oversees the distribution of the videotapes and the extensive teaching materials for the teachers and students. Otherwise, the EDUCATODOS drivers and field staff provide services to Telebásica centers in addition to their work with the EDUCATODOS centers.

EDUCATODOS and Telebásica Relationships

The IEQ/ EDUCATODOS curriculum development group does not work with Telebásica in any way other than to offer some support for evaluative studies of the program. In 2002, Telebásica hired its own civics specialist to develop Honduran history and civics modules to complement the universal history and civics materials in the Telebásica program. This apparent duplication of staff has arisen because Telebásica came as a project with Mexican support and the EDUCATODOS is a project supported by USAID. The Ministry of Education felt that it was logical to place the Telebásica program with the EDUCATODOS group, even though it was sponsored by another agency.

The Telebásica program operates during the day with trained teachers within centers that are being converted from six-grade primary schools to complete basic education schools of nine grades. It uses a curriculum that requires roughly five hours of instructional time per day and is organized around more or less traditional academic disciplines. EDUCATODOS operates in the evening through centers that can be located anywhere in a town or village (including factories, penal centers, private homes and even schools willing to loan a classroom for the evening) and with volunteer "facilitators." The Ministry of Education pays the teachers in the Telebásica centers thus increasing the Ministry's salary obligations when the centers expand and donor funds plus

local contributions of time and materials build extra classrooms onto existing primary school buildings. EDUCATODOS uses any space available at no cost and can expand indefinitely without major additional expense except for, perhaps, some addition of field organizers and promoters.

The Research

Many funding agencies, including USAID, insist on accountability and want feedback from funded projects showing what they have accomplished. This has produced a rich list of studies on USAID-funded activities in Honduras. A review of research on education from 1984 through 1999 by a former USAID staff member and current consultant to USAID in Honduras provides substantial information of help in understanding the current situation.[12] For instance, a 1995 study by John Edwards of Tulane University, using Honduran statistical data, showed that only half the school-age population had access at least to some schooling in 1970, while in 1990 almost all the children had access to primary school (though many did not continue to completion). A 1984 sector study by UNESCO (D. Carelli and J. Hallak) showed huge percentage increases in enrollments at all levels from 1974-1994 and by the late 1990s there were around one million additional enrollments in education at all levels, representing an increase of 182% in access for the period. Pre-school enrollment increased 651%, primary (grades one through six) increased 141%, 293% increase in grades seven through nine, 293% in grades 10 through 12 (*ciclo diversificado* in Honduras), and 514% in higher education.

This does not mean that all is well. Other studies, all reported in the above review, have shown that nowhere near 50% of the students are finishing secondary education (grades 10-12), a norm considered necessary for sustainable development. At least 90% must finish primary (grade nine) and far less are now doing so, with many in rural areas dropping out during the first three years of primary education. Even after substantial dropout from primary education (grades one through six), substantially more are graduating from sixth grade than can gain access to seventh grade (the entry level for secondary), even though grades seven through nine have recently become part of compulsory education.

Repeaters and dropouts have been studied extensively, as noted in the above review. Various reasons are given for such phenomena, including poor nutrition, need for children to

[12] Van Steenwyk, Ned, Investigaciones Educativas en Honduras: 1984-1999. Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, September, 1999.

work, and other social factors. Dropouts were studied and often found to be as intelligent as those who did not drop out. Other studies showed a lack of high-quality educational materials in the schools, poor quality of teacher preparation, reasonably poor school conditions, and other factors that drive educational quality. Similarly, studies have shown that rural areas do not offer the same educational opportunities as urban areas. Many recommendations have been made suggesting innovations in methods, materials and educational programs and improved teacher training in Honduras. At the same time, this review cautions that educational data are not reliable in Honduras, in spite of a major USAID project (costing some $1 million) to set up a computerized information system in the Ministry of Education, largely because all of the schools are not reporting their data each year. The study concludes that rational planning may not be possible in Honduras because of fluctuating resources year to year and because of centralized decision-making in Tegucigalpa. Just about every recommendation possible has been made over the years by the various researchers and consultants under various projects and programs.

EDUCATODOS receives most of its funds from USAID and has been the subject of many studies. Telebásica (with only modest support from USAID with most of the developmental and training costs being supported by the Mexican government) has been taken under the wing of EDUCATODOS and it has been the subject of several studies financed by USAID.

Most of these studies look at how much students learn in the two programs, apparently in an attempt to show government authorities that the programs, indeed, are teaching what is expected or more at the various levels. Other studies have looked at the impact of the programs on retention and dropout rates, the costs of the programs, and the opinions of those who are enrolled in the programs.

An evaluation of EDUCATODOS in 1997 (before grades 7-9 were introduced) showed that in two years (1995-1997), the program had offered 120,000 person years of additional schooling for Honduran young people and adults.[13] This was done at a cost of the equivalent of $28 for each person year as compared with an approximate cost of $100 per year of formal schooling. Each additional year of education offered resulted in additional income of $41 per year for those who are economically active. The study found the EDUCATODOS students did better on achievement tests than primary school students in traditional schools. The study suggested that the active participation of volunteer leaders and of various community groups in the program

[13] Van Steenwyk, Ned, "Evaluación de EDUCATODOS: 1997), Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, January, 1998

contributed to its success. There was significant dropout, however, in the program, especially among indigenous groups. The program has made little effort to develop curriculum modules especially adapted to the needs and interests of indigenous groups and this may be an area for future development.

Other findings included the information that slightly over half those finishing the program were women, while enrollees were virtually half male and half female. Female incomes (average per month, $12.79) were considerably less that those of the men ($22 per month) when they entered the program. These incomes were higher when they had finished an average of 8.9 months in the program (an increase of 128% on the part of women and 74% on the part of men). A later 1998 study on women in EDUCATODOS collected in-depth information from 341 female participants found that only 20% of them were economically active versus 80% of male participants.[14] About 25% of these female participants had quit formal education because of little interest in what was offered in school but returned to EDUCATODOS later when the evening program was available. Most of the female participants, however, had not gone to formal education or had dropped out because of other problems (family, migration, child care, etc.). EDUCATODOS was flexible enough so that they could return. A later study specifically on dropouts showed that men dropped out of the program slightly more often than women and that the most of the dropouts were at the earlier levels of the program.[15] At the sixth grade level. Dropout rates were minimal.

In 2000, USAID funded a new EDUCATODOS initiative to develop grades seven through nine. A new consortium under the USAID "Improving Educational Quality" or IEQ program set up a curriculum and materials development unit next to the EDUCATODOS administrative office on Picacho mountain overlooking Tegucigalpa. The Chief of Party, Carmen Siri, recruited local and international curriculum and materials specialists and the new program began in earnest. By early 2001, the seventh grade materials, including the recorded audio sequences, were ready and seventh grade centers opened on a pilot basis. The first seventh grade graduates were feted in Tegucigalpa in December 2001, and the Pedagogical University issued a study showing the achievement of the seventh grade EDUCATODOS cohort in mathematics and Spanish language.[16]

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[14] Van Steenwyk, Ned, Las Mujeres en el Programa de Educatodos, Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, October, 1998

[15] Van Steenwyk, Ned, "Los Desertores de EDUCATODOS," Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, 1998

[16] Unidad Externa de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (UMCE). *Evaluación Estudiantes de Séptimo Grado, Proyecto IEQ-Educatodos II: Español y Matemática.* Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Universidad Pedagógica Macional Francisco Morazán, January, 2002 (*Informe Ejecutivo,* draft).

Eighth grade classes opened in early 2002. In mid-2001, IEQ/EDUCATODOS decided to fund several studies of EDUCATODOS to show its impact in a way that would convince the government and donors that it should continue. The studies included:

- one to show the impact of the program on women;
- a second to show its impact on the economy, especially on the shops and factories that had sponsored EDUCATODOS centers;
- a third a qualitative study of the seventh grade level program;
- a fourth, a study of the volunteers in EDUCATODOS; and
- a fifth, a case study of the seventh grade to illustrate all of the infrastructure, organization and management elements that are part of the seventh grade program.

These studies, as of this writing (March, 2002) are still in draft (with the exception of the Facilitators study) and will be published within an *Experiences for a Quality Education* series by IEQ/EDUCATODOS. The drafts, however, and the one completed study indicate what the principle findings will be. In addition, a study of the achievement of seventh graders in the program was done by the Pedagogical University and issued in January 2002.

Impact on women

The study concerning women was done where EDUCATODOS has been operating in towns of Honduras that are below the poverty line.[17] In interviews and focus group discussions with participants in the classes, with the volunteer facilitator and with members of the community, a variety of significant findings were forthcoming. Most participants found the program to be helpful in day-to-day living, most felt that it raised their self-esteem, that it helped in forming leaders within the community and that it gave them legal information so that they could stand up for their rights as citizens. It appears that the facilitators adapt the program somewhat to local interests and needs and that the program helps participants in planning their lives and in learning how to participate in their communities in making decisions. At the same time, participants and facilitators felt that the program needed more resources such as reference materials, candles for evening work when there is no electricity, workbooks and writing material, and lack of resources to respond to increasing demand for the program. Although both men and women profited from the program, the women clearly felt that they were learning how to meet basic needs in ways that

[17] Tábora, Rocio, "Valoración del Impacto del Programa Educatodos en la Condición y Posición de las Mujeres Participantes y Facilitadores," IEQ/EDUCATODOS Honduras, draft, December 21, 2001

they had not learned earlier. Few participants mentioned that they were pleased at learning academic subjects; rather they emphasized other behaviors that they were learning: leadership, self-esteem, information useful in work, health and home, and control over circumstances that affect their lives. These results question whether standardized tests of academic subjects are the proper way to measure quality of education.

Impact on the economy

A second study looked at the impact of EDUCATODOS on the economy, especially in areas where factories and workshops have sponsored an EDUCATODOS study group.[18] Focus group discussions were held with participants in EDUCATODOS centers sponsored for their employees by factories, hotels, coffee processing centers, the shrimp industry, sugar industry, and baking industries, all in the north of the country. The economic impact of participation in EDUCATODOS was examined by level – the impact on those who had participated in first to third grade, those who participated in fourth to sixth grade, and those who had participated in the newly introduced seventh grade. In addition to students in the program, facilitators and employers were interviewed.

Preliminary results of this study (as yet in draft) show that most employers realize the need to upgrade the education of their employees. Several employers pointed out that some of their senior employees had far less than sixth-grade education and that this was not adequate for the responsibilities of these employees in the enterprise. Several of the businesses that sponsor EDUCATODOS make a big thing out of the end of the school year, with parties and celebrations for those completing a grade. This atmosphere is noted by employers as a very positive result of EDUCATODOS and many participants feel that EDUCATODOS is a valuable fringe benefit of working in the business.

Most businesses that sponsor EDUCATODOS centers invest resources in hosting the center. They provide use of their buildings, furniture, classroom materials, equipment, payment of a fee for facilitators and/or other benefits for facilitators (hours off, for instance), and hours off from work for participants in the classes. Most have not quantified these costs.

Employers felt that the program gave the employees a sense of belonging and that the working atmosphere was more cooperative and cordial as a result of participation in

[18] del Cid, Adolfo, "Impacto del Programa *Educatodos* en la Economía, la Producción y las Condiciones de Vida de los Participantes," IEQ/EDUCATODOS Honduras, draft, February 2002.

EDUCATODOS. As of this writing (mid-February, 2002) this study has not done quantitative measures of increase in productivity of those who have participated in EDUCATODOS, but the positive reaction of employers and employees would seem to suggest such an increase.

Qualitative Study of the Seventh Grade Experience

A third study, a qualitative analysis of the seventh grade experience, suggests that remarkable attitudinal and character changes as a result of participation in the program were more important to the participants than the actual academic learning. Although previous studies using various kind of achievement tests have shown that EDUCATODOS students do as well or slightly better in math and language than their counterparts in the formal schools, the seventh grade study is the first that highlights changes in values, attitudes and behaviors in the family and the community in the newly introduced seventh grade.[19]

Through focus group discussions and interviews it was found that the seventh grade program varied from location to location and that the facilitators and participants adapted the program to their needs. In one vocational education center, the instructor noted that the EDUCATODOS class could vary the themes according to the needs of the students and more time could be spent on one theme than another, if necessary. He felt the students were doing better in their work in the vocational center because of the EDUCATODOS program.

EDUCATODOS centers operating in penal institutions seem to be imparting a new sense of morality and responsibility among the participants. This is noted by both participants and facilitators. Where EDUCATODOS operates in agricultural settings, the local groups adapt the program to emphasize natural science, civics and mathematics that they find particularly useful in the agricultural setting. A number of participants noted that the communications skills they are learning have changed their way of resolving conflicts. Rather that fighting as a way of resolving conflicts, dialogue is being used.

Many participants in both urban, semi-urban and rural areas noted that EDUCATODOS had in many ways changed their personalities. They were becoming more self-confident, both in the family, in the community and at work, with a more positive self-image. Many indicated that they were taking more initiative in their personal lives and in improving the conditions of the family. They were feeling more valued and many felt that they were becoming more creative and innovative.

[19] See other studies, including those by van Steenwyk, for data on similar attitudinal changes at the earlier grades.

It would seem that the way EDUCATODOS operates in a non-formal setting, with volunteers as teachers and helpers, is ideal for helping out-of-school young people and adults grow as individuals. Self-esteem, creativity, leadership skills, values and moral standards are character traits that are developed in EDUCATODOS classes. This impact of the program would seem to be at least as significant as the increase in academic achievement as noted in standardized tests.

The IMCE (Pedagogical University) study in 2001 of the achievement of first group of seventh grade EDUCATODOS participants showed mixed results. About half the students tested in Spanish language classes received marks above 66%, a level considered passing at the seventh grade level. The rest had marks about the equivalent of fourth grade graduates. In mathematics, only about 17.6% of the seventh grade completers achieved 66% or better on the tests; the rest had, on average, math skills of fourth graders. At the same time, the EDUCATODOS students did much better than comparable students in regular schools and in elementary schools (grades 1-6) that were becoming secondary schools by adding on grades 7-9.[20] These results show the promise of EDUCATODOS in terms of academic achievement while at the same time raising questions about the standards set by the Ministry of Education as to what should be learned at what grade level. If most of the schools do not meet the standards set by the Ministry, it is likely that the standards need to be rethought to more clearly match what is possible in the school system.

The Volunteer Facilitators (Teachers) of Educatodos

A fourth current study focuses on the facilitators in EDUCATODOS.[21] This study shows that as of late 2002 there were about 4,000 voluntary facilitators who contribute their time to the program. EDUCATODOS promoters interviewed 505 in this study, 426 who worked in grades one through six and 79 who participate in the relatively new grade seven. In addition, 199 former volunteers were interviewed in order to find out why they had dropped out of the program.

This study shows that the volunteers are rather special people in their communities. Some 92% of those interviewed participate in other civic groups and 64% have leadership positions in such organizations. About 94% indicate that they do not accept the position because of economic incentives (although some receive food incentives through the World Food Program). Around 99% indicate that they feel more happy, content and animated because of their participation in the program. The active facilitators have served an average of 22 months and those

[20] Unidad Externa de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (UMCE), op. cit., *Informe Executivo*, pp. 2-4.
[21] Van Steenwyk, Ned, "Los Facilitadores Voluntarios de EDUCATODOS, Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, January 2002.

who left the program served an average of 18 months. One in three of those who left may be willing to return to the program if the schedule is appropriate and if other family responsibilities permit. Most say that they dropped out because the schedule was difficult for them or that work interfered. Some indicated that there was lack of interest among their students and others indicated that they had moved to another community.

Those who are volunteers in the grade one through six program have relatively less education than those who volunteer for the seventh grade (the first of three grades of what would be termed middle school in other countries). Three of four volunteers at the lower level have sixth grade education or less while 51% of the volunteers at seventh grade level have had university studies. In 2001, it is estimated that the opportunity cost of time contributed by volunteers is about $645,000, based on the opportunity costs and earnings of volunteers who are economically active outside the program.

The author of the study of volunteers recently completed another study on illiteracy in the areas served by EDUCATODOS.[22] In this study, over 200,000 people were surveyed in ten provinces and over 91,000 indicated that they would like to study with EDUCATODOS if it were available in their communities. Nearly 27,000 indicated that they would be willing to serve as volunteer facilitators. This suggests that there is a potential volunteer facilitator for each 3.4 potential students. Accordingly, there appears to be an adequate supply of volunteers should the program expand.

What next?

Various funding agencies are negotiating with the new government to define what they intend to do next. USAID, for example, may Honduras at one of its Centers of Excellence within its new global education effort by that name. If this happens, the National Pedagogical University will likely be the coordinating institution in Honduras, with linkages with the Institute for Educational Communications (ILCE) in Mexico and other institutions in Central America. One of the initial efforts of this regional program may be the development of textbooks for first to third grades for use in Central America. Notwithstanding the collapse of earlier efforts to create textbooks of use throughout the region (through such USAID-funded organizations such at the Regional Technical Aids Center [RTAC] in Mexico), there appears to be a new atmosphere of

[22] Van Steenwyk, Ned,, "El Analfabetismo en la Zona de Influencia de EDUCATODOS," Secretaría de Educacion (Honduras), EDUCATODOS, January 2002.

cooperation in Central America, and this effort may succeed. How this might affect the EDUCATODOS curriculum for the first three grades is not clear. Nor is it clear whether the "Centers of Excellence" global program of USAID will have any concern for alternative delivery systems.

The World Bank (WB) and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB)) have agreed to fund additional education efforts in Honduras. The World Bank will concentrate on grades one through six while the IDB will work with grades seven through nine. It is likely that the IDB program will have some support for alternative delivery systems, although this is not clear. Often with such organizations, when they begin a new cycle, outside experts recommend the initiation of new programs and projects rather than the support of existing, proven ones, especially if the proven ones have been started and supported by other agencies. A wild card is the German support. Under an agreement several years ago, GTZ (the German technical assistance group) is supplying advisors to the Ministry of Education. These advisors have been working on a variety of educational and curriculum reform projects. How these will mesh with recommendations and projects of other agencies is not as yet clear. Although the donor agencies meet together regularly, these meetings tend to simply divide up the turf without arriving at plans and programs that share resources among the agencies and that encourage cooperation and sharing among projects funded by the different agencies. The situation is further complicated by support of the Spanish government for some basic education pilot projects, Japanese interest in helping in the education area, and a variety of NGO's and church groups with education interests.

In any case, whatever the funding politics of the future, it seems clear that:

- Alternative delivery systems such as EDUCATODOS must be used in Honduras to supplement planned expansion of traditional schools if the government is to achieve its goal of having 90% of the children complete nine grades of education by 2015.
- EDUCATODOS, the interactive audio/print package delivery system offered in the evenings, and the Telebásica program, a television/videotape-based strategy for improving quality, student retention and efficiency in the Basic Education Centers during the day, are preparing students whose achievement matches or exceeds that of students in the regular school system.
- Equally as important, the studies show that both EDUCATODOS and Telebásica, which is managed by EDUCATODOS, dramatically change the self-image of many participants, giving them more self-confidence, encouraging them to become more active in community

issues, and providing them with the communication, math and other skills to work more effectively with their families and children.

- Economically, it appears clear that many participants who complete one or more grades in these programs are able to improve their earning potential, either in self-employment or working for others. The self-employment aspect is crucial inasmuch as much of the Honduran economy is in the informal sector and this sector is largely ignored in many economic development plans and statistics that relate to them.
- From the point of view of efficiency, these programs cost, per participant, much less that traditional school programs.
- EDUCATODOS attracts large numbers of volunteers, most of whom are active in other community organizations. A recent survey suggests that the volunteer pool is sufficient to completely staff EDUCATODOS classes should the program be expanded nationwide.
- In terms of curriculum, both EDUCATODOS and Telebásica offer innovative packaging that delight the participants and flexibility that encourages them to adapt and apply their learning to their environment.
- The results of seventh grade program introduced by IEQ/EDUCATODOS in 2001 clearly show that the program will work as well at this level as it has since 1995 at the grade 1-6 level. As grades eight and nine are introduced in 2002 and 2003, demand for this level will increase substantially.

The task for the immediate future is to define exactly what is needed to sustain the effort in the future. Needed will be:

- A clear map of what is essential as core organization and structure to sustain the program
- A map of alternative possibilities for funding various levels of expansion; and
- Long-term operational relationships with the government, non-governmental organizations, funding organizations, and other alternative educational delivery systems in the country.

An impressive beginning has been made by IEQ/EDUCATODOS staff in preparing in late 2001 a long-term strategy document.[23] The direction established by this document, and various

[23] Educatodos and IEQ/Honduras. *Educatodos: Plan Estratégico2002-2006 – Visión y Misión.* Tegucigalpa, Honduras, December 2001 (draft).

alternative funding possibilities included, are promising in terms of attracting future support for the program.

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